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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an annotated bibliography of sets of multicultural, family-related literature and suggests ways that teachers may build a sense of personal and global community in their classrooms as cultural differences are read about, discussed, and celebrated. The paper first gives a rationale for studying nontraditional, multicultural families. The paper then presents a 57-item annotated bibliography of books published between 1967 and 1993, divided into sections on grandparents; elderly friends and extended family; dealing with death; homelessness; a new baby; divorce/absent parent; growing and changing; interracial families; and siblings. The paper also offers ideas for classroom discussions and activities that extend literature study. (RS)

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American Families: Not Just Leave It To Beaver

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Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to provide an annotated bibliography of sets of multicultural, family-related literature and to suggest ways that teachers may build a sense of personal and global community in their classrooms as cultural differences are read about, discussed and celebrated. First, a rationale for studying nontraditional, multicultural families is given. Second, collections of multicultural literature sets in an annotated bibliography are listed. Third, ideas for classroom discussions and activities that extend literature study are offered.

Rationale : Books and units on families have long had an established place in the kindergarten and first grade curriculum in most elementary schools. However, the depth and breadth of experiences that children engage in are becoming less appropriate in the changing American culture. For example, in a typical classroom scenario, a first grade teacher gathers 20 students eager young children around her in the reading corner of a classroom. She shows the cover illustrations, reads the title, and asks the children to predict what will happen in the story before opening the book and beginning to read. During the reading, she pauses occasionally to ask children questions and encourage comments. In order to extend and enrich the children's thinking about families, at story's end, she directs the children back to their desks to draw a picture about the story. And in many classrooms all of the families in all of the stories read are of the traditional family structure: one father, one mother, and two siblings. Seldom do children in many classrooms have the opportunity to draw pictures of, or discuss families that reflect their own cultural heritage or nontraditional family structure.

These are important considerations in an ever changing society that continues to produce alternatives to the traditional family structure, the nuclear family is no longer the typical family. In fact, recent statistics suggest that only 26% of American families reflect the once traditional family structure. Elementary school aged children have a growing need to understand their own and other family structures. Teachers and school programs may become agents of social change which promote both educational and cultural diversity. For example, teachers' heightened

CS214308

awareness of resources, methods, and strategies may offer an opportunity for personal renewal.

Explorations into family cultures as seen in children's and young adult literature may well result in children's increased tolerance, and understanding of varied household organizations, as well as acceptance of their own family structure. By visiting families in children's literature young children may explore and appreciate their own family history and learn about others. Children need to "see" themselves in stories to be validated as individuals, members of nontraditional families and full participants in valued, nonmainstream cultures. In addition, children need to understand that all families, in all cultures, have common experiences such as love, gaining and offering support, growing together, celebrating cultural events, dealing with disappointment, etc.

Annotated Bibliography:

- **Intergenerational Families:** We have included this literature set because in an aging America more and more grandparents and older adults from the community are becoming part of extended family units. By looking at the role of grandparents and older adults across cultures children may come to appreciate and understand the universals involved in the ageing process and the contributions of elderly relatives within dynamic family structures. As a result of engaging in talk and activities related to these books, some children may lose a fear of older people, or gain understanding about the daily lives of the elderly, or have opportunities to establish meaningful, new relationships with older people in the community.

Grandparents

Ackerman, K. (1988). *Song and Dance Man*. New York: Albert A. Knopf.

Grandpa entertains his visiting grandchildren with songs and dances from his days in vaudeville.

Dorros, A. (1991). *Abuela*. New York: E. P. Dutton.

A little girl and her abuela (grandmother) take a bus trip into New York. They imagine all the sights and sounds they will see and hear.

Flournoy, Valerie (1985). *The Patchwork Quilt*. New York: Dial Books For Young Readers.

African American Tanya can't understand why spending a year to make a homemade quilt makes the quilt more special than one bought in a store until Grandma helps her appreciate family history and traditions.

Garland, Sherry (1993). *The Lotus Seed*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers.

A young Vietnamese girl remembers the emperor of her country by saving a lotus seed and carries it with her to America. The seed becomes a symbol of hope and new beginnings within a family over the years as the girl grows up and becomes a grandmother.

Griffith, Helen (1986). *Georgia Music*. New York: Greenwillow Books.

A young girl and her grandfather learn about each other through appreciating the music of his harmonica and the music of the insects and birds chirping in Georgia.

Hest, Amy (1988). *The Crack-of-dawn Walkers*. New York: Penguin Books.

Sadie and her grandfather go for a special early morning walk every other Sunday.

Hoffman, Mary (1991). *Amazing Grace*. New York: Dial Books For Young Readers.

In this story about a young African American girl, readers are invited to find out how grandmother helps Grace resolve a problem. Even though Grace is a natural actress (evidenced by the fact that she roleplays being Joan of Arc. or Anasi the Spider), her classmates suggest that she can't possibly take the role of Peter Pan in the school play because she is female and African American.

Johnson, Angela. (1990). *When I Am Old With You*. Orchard Books.

A young African-American child thinks about joyous times with a grandfather by imagining growing old with him.

MacLachlan, Patricia (1991). *Journey*. A Dell Yearling Book.

Journey and his sister, Cat, have to live with their grandparents the summer their mother leaves them. Journey's time is one of introspection and discovery, as he searches the photographs his grandfather takes in order to know about his past.

Dr. Sherry Field & Dr. Linda Labbo
The University of Georgia
Kappa Delta Pi 39th Biannual Convocation, 1994
Orlando, Florida

Saikai, Kimiko (1990). *Sachiko Means Happiness*. Children's Book Press.
When grandmother suffers from Alzheimer's, Sachiko learns to understand that even though grandmother doesn't recognize her the love they share will remain.

Say, Allen (1993). *Grandfather's Journey*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.
A Japanese American man tells about grandfather's journey from Japan to America . He later retraces his father's journey and experiences his grandfather's feelings of experiencing nostalgia for his home country and his new country.

Polacco, Patricia (1993). *Chicken Sunday*. New York: Scholastic Inc.
African American children want to buy their grandmother an Easter hat from Mr. Kodinski's hat shop, and learn a lesson in love and intercultural understanding.

Rylant, Cynthia (1992). *When I Was Young in the Mountains*. New York: E. P. Dutton.
A child from Appalachia recalls fondly the warm and memorable summers she spent with her grandparents when she was growing up. Illustrations filled with country and Americana artifacts add to her narrative.

Selway, Martina (1992). *Don't Forget to Write*. Nashville, TN: Ideals Children's Books.
Rosie's daily letters to mom become a personal journal record of her changing feelings about visiting her grandparents.

Walter, Mildred Pitts (199?). *Justin And The Best Biscuits In The World*. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books.
Justin's grandfather helps him learn to gain self-confidence and to appreciate his heritage during a visit to grandfather's ranch.

Zolotow, Charlotte (1972). *William's Doll*. New York: Harper & Row.
William's grandmother help's the boy's father understand that he wants a doll so he can practice being a father.

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Orlando, Florida

Elderly Friends & Extended Family

Dugan, Barbara (1993). *Loop the Loop*. Puffin Books.

Young Anne's opinion and relationship with Mrs. Simpson, the "old lady in a wheelchair," expands when she catches a glimpse of Mrs. Simpson['s yo-yo.

Fox, Mem (1985). *Wilfred Gordon McDonald Patridge*. New York: Kane/Miller Book Publishers.

A young boy helps an elderly friend rediscover her memories through sharing his artifacts.

Palmer, Kate Salley (1992). *Mrs. Katz and Tush*. New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc.

This cross cultural book demonstrates the mutual love and support that can be shared by people who see beyond color, age and religious boundaries in an extended family.

Palmer, Kate (1991). *A Gracious Plenty*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Two sisters remember their visits with Great-aunt May who had books everywhere, wrote many letters, and had, she claimed, "a gracious plenty."

• **Families in Transition**: We have included this literature set because many American families are in transition. By looking at the topics of death, homelessness, birth of a new baby, and divorce, children may discover commonalties and differences when faced with similar problems. As a result of engaging in talk and activities related to these books, some children may have opportunities to talk about losing a loved family member, recognizing a growing social concern of homeless families, dealing with the birth of a new sibling, or even grappling with the difficult issue of divorce.

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Kappa Delta Pi 39th Biannual Convocation, 1994
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Dealing with Death

Boyd, C. (1984). *Circle of Gold*. New York: Scholastic, Inc.

Mattie wants to buy her mother a gold pin for mother's day after her father dies. Losing her best babysitting job doesn't help, but Mattie does not give up.

Bunting, Eve (1982). *The Happy Funeral*. New York: Harper and Row.

A Chinese-American girl helps plan her grandfather's funeral and comes to understand why her mother says, "When someone is very old and has lived a good life, he is happy to go."

Miles, Miska (1971). *Annie and the Old One*. Canada: Little, Brown and Company.

Annie tries to stem the passage of time when the Old One must finish weaving her last Navajo rug and go to Mother Earth. Slowly, she learns about life's cycles and changes that are inevitable.

Nystrom, Carolyn (1990). *Emma Says Goodbye*. A Lion Book.

Emma's beloved Aunt Sue has cancer and comes to live with her and her family. Aunt Sue and Emma's relationship grows as they prepare a quilt of the seasons. As Aunt Sue's condition worsens, Emma knows she will have to finish the quilt alone.

Rylant, Cynthia (1992). *Missing May*. A Yearling Book.

Summer has lived with Aunt May and Uncle Ob since she was six. When Aunt May dies, Summer and Uncle Ob must find strength together.

Taha, K.(1981). *A Gift for Ti'a Rosa*. New York: Bantam First Skylark.

A young girl learns to cope with the illness and then death of her favorite aunt by learning to give love to others.

Homelessness

Bunting, Eve (1991). *Fly Away Home*. Clarion Books.

A young boy and his father survive, with the help of other homeless friends, in an urban airport. Watching a trapped bird escape to freedom--flying away home--gives them hope.

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Fox, Paula (1991). *Monkey Island*. New York: Orchard, Watts.

When Clay's mother disappears, he begins to live on the street. Luckily, he is befriended by Buddy and Calvin, two street people who become his family.

Greenberg, Keith (1992). *Erik Is Homeless*. Lerner Publications Company.

Black and white photographs illustrate Erik's days and nights. In a straightforward, nonsentimental manner, Erik's life is described, from sleeping in a crowded shelter, to participating in family decisions.

Guthrie, Donna (1988). *A Rose for Abby*. Abingdon Press.

Life on the street is difficult but a rose brightens everyone's day.

<u>New Baby</u>

Alexander, M. (1979). *When The New Baby Comes, I'm Moving Out*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers.

A little boy who's about to become a big brother learns to work through his feelings of anger and to look forward to the arrival of a new baby.

Greenfield, Eloise. (1974). *She Come Bringing Me That Little Baby Girl*. J.B. Lippincott.

Even though Kevin is not enthralled with his baby sister when she comes home from the hospital, he begins to mellow as he learns the responsibilities--and the benefits--of being a big brother.

Keats, Ezra Jack. (1967). *Peter's Chair*. New York: Harper Trophy.

Peter is helped to come to grips with the arrival of a new baby when he is asked to give up his favorite chair. He is happy when he understands that he has outgrown his chair and his ready for a new one.

Ziefert, Harriet (1989) *Before I Was Born*. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

Parents lovingly prepare in their own way for their first-born child. Father makes a hand-hewn cradle, and mother crafts a quilt intended to become part of the child's treasures.

Divorce/Absent Parent

Boyd, Lizi. (1987). *The Not-So-Wicked Stepmother.* New York: Viking Press.

Hessie spends the summer with her father and his new wife and changes her mind about her stepmother.

Christiansen, C.B. (1989). *My Mother's House, My Father's House.* New York: Macmillan.

A little girl is faced with, and learns to adapt to, the joint custody agreement her parents have after their divorce.

• Cleary, Beverly (1983). *Dear Mr. Henshaw.* A Dell Yearling Book.

Leigh Botts' poignant letters to author Henshaw reveal his hopes, dreams, fears, sense of humor, and the reality of being a child grappling with divorce and change.

• Drescher, Joan. (1986). *My Mother's Getting Married.* New York: Dial Books for Young Readers

Katy likes things the way they are, and she is not looking forward to her mother's upcoming marriage to Ben. Katy's mother lets her invite her whole class to the wedding, serves chocolate cake, and reassures her that they will still find special time together.

Greenfield, Eloise. (1978). *Talk About A Family.* Apple Paperbacks Scholastic.

Genny believes that she and her brother Larry, home from the army, can keep her parents together. When they can't, the four children in this African-American family must come to some new understandings about love and support.

Helmering, Doris Wild. (1981). *I Have Two Families.* Nashville: Abingdon Press.

The voice of a young girl is heard in this story of divorce and separation.

Jukes, Mavis. (1984). *Like Jake and Me.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

The relationship between Jake and his stepfather, a macho cowboy, is enhanced by Jake's persistence in wanting to help his stepfather and be accepted.

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The University of Georgia
Kappa Delta Pi 39th Biannual Convocation, 1994
Orlando, Florida

Jukes, Mavis. (1983). *No One Is Going To Nashville*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

A little girl who loves animals is surprised when she is allowed to keep a stray dog, and because of this discovers a kindred spirit in her new stepmother.

Williams, Barbara W. (1983). *Mitzi's Honeymoon with Nana Potts*. New York: Dell Publishing.

Mitzi and her step-grandmother, Nana Potts, are prepared to dislike one another. But those preconceived notions begin to disappear while Mitzi' mother is on her honeymoon and Mitzi stays with Nana.

Zolotow, C. (1971). *A Father Like That*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers.

A young boy who's never met his father, describes what his father would be like and imagines the times they would spend together.

• **Family Relationships:** We have included this literature set because relationships in families are worthy of discussion and children's consideration. By looking at the complex roles of family members and their relationships, children will have the opportunity to consider how families grow and change, how sibling relationships are often tumultuous, and how families don't all look the same. As a result of engaging in talk and activities related to these books, some children may gain new insights into their own dynamic family relationships, appreciate diverse families, and be better able to cope with their unique family situations.

Growing and Changing

Blaine, M. (1975). *The Terrible Thing That Happened At Our House*. New York: Scholastic, Inc.

A humorous, honest look at the upheaval experienced in one family when mother decides to return to teaching school.

DuPasquier, Philippe (1985). *Dear Daddy*. London: Penguin Books.

A little girl learns to deal with her father's absence for a year by writing him a letter of all the things she and her family encounter while he's away at work. The unique split illustrations show images of father's world as a merchant marine, and the little girls world in a traditional neighborhood.

- Loh, Morag (1987). *Tucking Mommy In*. Australia: Ashton Scholastic.

  Two Asian sisters help their mommy go to bed one night when she is very tired.

- Steptoe, John (1980). *Daddy Is A Monster. . . Sometimes*. Harper Trophy.

  The usually warm and friendly relationship between a father and his children, Bweela and Javaka, is disrupted occasionally when he becomes "a monster," reacting to their mishaps. Humorous illustrations belie the seriousness of the father's irritation, however, and the children admit that he is a monster "only sometimes."

Interracial Families

- Adoff, Arnold (1971). *Black is Brown is Tan*.

  This story of a racially-mixed family is lovingly told through common, everyday events.

- Freedman, Ina (1986). *How My Parents Learned to Eat*.

  A young girl whose American father courted her Japanese mother when he was a young Naval recruit humorously reveals why her family sometimes eats with chopsticks and sometimes with a knife and fork.

Siblings

Blume, J. (1974). *The Pain and the Great One*. New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc.

A story of the relationships between siblings told from the perspective of each. Opens the doors for many discussions in the classroom about taking different perspectives, exploring two sides of the same story, etc.

Dr. Sherry Field & Dr. Linda Labbo
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Kappa Delta Pi 39th Biannual Convocation, 1994
Orlando, Florida

Gauch, Patricia Lee (1987). *Christina Katerina and the Time She Quit the Family*. G.P. Putnam's Sons.
Christina Katerina has had it with her brother, John, and with her parents. When she is punished for something John has done, she decides to quit the family.

Hoberman, Mary Ann (1991). *Fathers, Mothers, Sisters, Brothers: A Collection of Family Poems*. Scholastic Inc.
This collection of family-themed poems includes titles such as My Baby Brother, Four Generations, The Little Sister Store, and Shy.

Koller, Jackie French (1991). *If I Had One Wish*. A Yearling Book.
Alec's frustrations with his little brother, Stevie, are dissipated only momentarily when he makes Stevie disappear. It seems as is Stevie had never been born, and the whole family has changed.

Soto, Gary (1993). *Too Many Tamales*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.
During a Christmas family get together, Maria tries on her mother's wedding ring while making tamales. The fun begins when Maria realizes she lost the wedding ring while mixing the tamales.

Williams, B. (1978). *Jeremy Isn't Hungry*. New York: E. P. Dutton.
Jeremy has trouble helping mom out by feeding the baby.

Wilson, J. (1988). *Oh Brother!* New York: Scholastic, Inc.
Alex is tired of his older brother, Andrew, pushing him around. While trying to teach Andrew a lesson, Alex learns to be himself.

Suggested Discussion and Response Activities

Many of the following topics for discussion or suggested activities will be appropriate for any of the books in the literature sets. However, within each category we list relevant possibilities and highlight at least one book-related activity.

• Reader's Theater This activity consists of turning a storybook into a script that will be read by children. It is not intended to be a play, but rather an exploration of dialogue through voice interpretation.

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Children may help prepare the text for reading, or the teacher may prepare the script and highlight different parts. *Wilfred Gordon McDonald Patridge* is appropriate for Reader's Theater because the story is full of dialogue involving many characters. One child may serve as narrator, reading the nondialogue, descriptive story parts. Another child may read Wilfred's words and yet others the parts of Wilfred's many elderly friends.

• Cross Story Voices This activity consists of comparing voices of similar characters across many stories. For example, the voices of grandparents from many stories may be shared, discussed, and recorded. Children may select relevant dialogue from stories within literature sets and then take turns reading and discussing the selections. Children may represent the character's voice by displaying the book cover or a self-made illustration and sharing the selected passages. For example, sage advice of elderly friends or grandparents can be heard when children read quotes or excerpts from *Amazing Grace*, "You can be anything you want, Grace, if you put your mind to it." *Loop the Loop*, " Live life to the fullest." And *William's Doll*, "He needs it [the doll] . . . to hug and to cradle and to take to the park so that when he's a father, like you, he'll know how to take care of his baby and feed him and love him and bring him the things he wants, like a doll, so that he can practice being a father."

• Letters This activity consists of writing letters. Writing letters in response to literature helps children find and express their own voices. Letters could be written to: a grandparent after reading *When I Am Old With You*. to continue speculation about the things one can do with an older person, when they are together in the future; an elderly friend or a person in an old folks home about their special memories after reading *Wilfred Gordon McDonald Patridge*.; or an absent family member, updating them on their current activities, after reading *Dear Daddy*. Another way to use letter writing is to invite children to give advice to a story character. For example, in *Jeremy Isn't Hungry*, Jeremy has difficulty feeding his little baby brother. What advice could children write to help Jeremy solve his problem.

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• Oral histories: This activity consists of(Oral History/Timeline)parents/ grandparents/elderly *How My Parents Learned To Eat*, children may interview their parents about how they met and married. *Eric Is Homeless* offers an everyday depiction of Eric's family life. Children could write and orate their daily family activities.

• Portrait Gallery This activity consists of children drawing portraits of story characters or family members. Teachers may mat, frame and/or display different collections of children's artistic images of families in portrait (hallway) galleries.

• Artifacts -This activity consists of sharing artifacts that are relevant to stories and then inviting children to share artifacts that are relevant in their own lives. In *Before I Was Born*. a baby quilt may be shared to represent the anticipation parents feel on the arrival of a new baby. Children may bring in personal artifacts such as: photographs, baby blankets, baby bracelets, etc. *When I Was Young In the Mountains* lends itself to artifact inquiry in that many objects (e.g., kitchen implements, farm tools, general store items) may represent the main character's lives.

• POV Writing Learning to see events from two points of view is a sophisticated task. Many children's books invite children to see life from more than one perspective. After hearing, *The Pain and the Great One*, children may write about how the main characters differed in their unique perspectives. They may also write about an incident that occurred at home from the point of view of an involved sibling. After hearing a poem from *Fathers, Mothers, Sisters, Brothers*, children can write from the point of view of one poem's family member to another.

• Map study - This activity consists of tracing family journeys on a map. After reading *Grandfather's Journey* children can map the route grandfather took from Japan to California, across the United States, and back to Japan. A classroom World Wall can be flagged with story titles after literature is shared from a particular city, state, region or country.

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• Family Tree This activity consists of inviting children to represent their traditional or nontraditional families in diverse family tree structures. Some children may have family trees that have two trunks and many branches that illustrate mixed family structure and rich family histories. This activity would work well after children have listened to books about step parents and half brothers and sisters.

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